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# **‘Give It Back, George’: Network Dynamics in the Philanthropic Field**

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## **Abstract**

This paper assumes a network dynamics perspective to explore the charitable sector campaign known as ‘Give it Back, George’, which overturned a threatening tax change announced in the UK Budget 2012. We consider network activity from diverse viewpoints. Collaboration by disparate players enhanced the campaign’s legitimacy, high-status actors with a *tertius iungens* strategic orientation eschewing the limelight whilst others took centre stage. Whilst extant research has shown how lower-status actors may profit from the networks of prominent individuals, we demonstrate that the reverse may apply. We suggest that elite actors who activate ties and bring together disconnected others are often less visible than apparent dominant actors. Social movements are not always reformist but may be deployed by elite incumbents to preserve the *status quo*. The story we narrate here is therefore less concerned with field transformation than with *field preservation at the elite level* when faced with threatening change.

## **Keywords**

Agency, elite actors, field of power, network dynamics, philanthropy, social movements, social networks

## **Introduction**

This paper examines the dynamics of networked collective action in the philanthropic field (Castells, 2004; Castells, 2010; Juris, 2004; Kahler, 2009; Mizruchi, 2013). We explore the idea that dominant actors who catalyse change by activating ties and bringing disconnected actors together are often less visible than *apparent* dominant actors. The empirical setting is the charity tax campaign known as ‘Give it Back, George: Drop the Charity Tax’, orchestrated by philanthropic actors in the UK, designed to overturn a proposed cap on tax relief on charitable donations announced by British Chancellor George Osborne in his 2012 Budget. The immediate goal of the ‘Give it Back, George’ campaign (henceforth GIBG) was to have the proposed ‘charity tax’ reversed, maintaining the flow of funds to frontline charities. A

secondary but important goal was to protect the collective reputation of wealthy philanthropists and their right to decide how taxes are spent on good causes.

The GIBG campaign, which ran for two months from March to May 2012, was masterminded by a trio of network organizations: the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NVCO), an umbrella organization which represents voluntary associations; the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF), designed to help people and businesses give more effectively to good causes; and the Philanthropy Review (PR), an independent organization with a membership of well-to-do individuals from the worlds of business and charity. The campaign swiftly snowballed. Endowed with a bespoke website, visual identity (a sketch of Osborne holding aloft his budget box), slogan, Twitter hashtag (#giveitbackgeorge), and amplified by daily stories in the press, it attracted widespread support from organizations, individuals and social media, whose diversity, institutional mix and united voice accorded it singular legitimacy (Suchman, 1995; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). The campaign ended abruptly on 31 May 2012 when Osborne capitulated, jettisoning his proposals for reform.

The seemingly spontaneous coming together of individuals, organizations and networks as a broadly based social movement to resist and ultimately defeat game-changing government proposals, provides a rich setting for the exploration and development of theoretical ideas relating to network emergence, orchestration and dynamics. Recent years have seen a marked expansion in the theoretical horizons, empirical concerns and methodological underpinnings of social network research (Borgatti, Brass & Halgin, 2014; Borgatti, Mehra, Brass & Labianca, 2009). The long-standing interest in network structures and the impact of differing network configurations on organizational performance remains central, as does the rich

conceptual apparatus that characterizes the field, but the research agenda has been expanded and new lines of enquiry opened up (Zaheer, Gözübüyük & Milanova, 2010). Three developments have been influential in shaping this paper. The first is recognition of the importance of network dynamics to outcomes; of network activation, orchestration and deployment, and the role of contingencies in determining possibilities (Ahuja, Soda & Zaheer, 2012; Paquin & Howard-Grenville, 2013; Sasovova, Mehra, Borgatti & Schippers, 2010). The second is a greater emphasis on agency within networks, ‘the agentic processes that help shape social networks over time’ (Sasovova et al., 2010, p.662); as well as on actor types, the roles played by individuals and organizations, and the exercise of power by playmakers (Brass & Burkhardt, 1993; Burkhardt & Brass, 1990; Burt, 2012; Gulati & Srivastava, 2014; Kahler, 2009; Obstfeld, 2005). The third is a greater understanding of contexts and processes bearing upon the functioning and evolution of networks; of history, temporality and decay (Borgatti et al., 2009; Castells, 2010; Kijkuit & van den Ende, 2010; Kossinets & Watts, 2006; Mizruchi, 2013; Sasovova et al., 2010; Zaheer & Soda, 2009). This paper builds on these developments.

Specifically, we address three research questions. The first concerns mobilization and momentum: when confronted with government power, how can social activism be mobilized around flexible alternative networks to resist change from above? The second concerns agency and strategy: how do individual agents assume control of strategy and determine tactics, proactively and reactively, in pursuit of network objectives? The third concerns power and governance: how and in what circumstances might dominant agents assume control of erstwhile spontaneous, collectivist networks?

Our paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we survey the theoretical terrain to clarify and elaborate on debates surrounding network dynamics and social activism. We draw on Bourdieu's (1993, 1996) notion of the 'field of power', which we define as an elite networking space for actors bent on setting or retuning institutional agendas. The following section is methodological, explaining our data sources and research methods. We then present an original reconstruction of the GIBG campaign based on multiple sources drawn from different vantage points. In our findings section, we consider actors, roles, network dynamics and the framing of logics of action in the GIBG campaign. Finally, we discuss our findings, consider their implications for the theory and practice of network dynamics in the philanthropic field, and reflect on the limitations of the study and potentialities for future research.

### **Network Dynamics and Social Movements**

Castells (2004) regards networks as fundamental to human living. They are in his eyes the 'new social morphology' of our times (Castells, 2010, p.500). Networks provide both the *conduits* that channel resources and the *lenses* through which observers understand action (Owen-Smith & Powell, 2008). Viewed in this light, networks are fundamental to fields characterized by specific logics of action; with the 'situated and often improvised performances of highly bounded, but nonetheless purposive, organizational and individual agents' having the potential over time to produce 'a motor for evolution and change' (Owen-Smith & Powell, 2008, p.618). All social networks fall within the broad definition proposed by Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve and Tsai (2004, p.795) of 'a set of nodes and the set of ties representing some relationship, or lack of relationship, between the nodes'. Nodes typically are organizations or individuals. Ties are bonds of association that imply a capacity for collective action.

In this section, we introduce the main theoretical ideas employed to make sense of the GIBG campaign. Three distinctions underpin our theoretical position. First, we distinguish between *dominant* and *subordinate* actors (nodes) within networks (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Dominant, higher-status actors have abundant economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital, according them ‘a disproportionate share of future ties’ (Zaheer & Soda, 2009, p.4) from which they derive ‘accumulative advantage’ (Powell, Koput, White & Owen-Smith, 2005, p.1140). Subordinate, lower-status actors on the other hand do not, suggesting that the latter are dependent in some degree on the former (Simmel, 1971). Second, we distinguish between *field-specific networks* and networks within the *field of power* (Bourdieu, 1993; 1996). Field-specific networks are composed of actors (nodes) sharing common characteristics and bound by common interests. In contrast, networks within the field of power are composed of elite actors drawn from diverse fields who make common cause in realizing or defending society-wide institutional arrangements. Finally, we distinguish between *social movements* and *elite networks* (Krinsky & Crossley, 2014). In social movements power is latent and broadly distributed, individuals united by common cause (Borgatti et al., 2009), whereas in elite networks power is normally more evident, concentrated and focused on specific objectives (Davis & Greve, 1997; Maclean, Harvey & Chia, 2010).

#### *Network topographies and actor types*

Social network research focuses attention on the relationships between actors rather than on the activities of isolated individuals, and emphasizes the importance of reciprocity, shared values and trust between actors as pre-conditions for network effectiveness (Josserand, 2004). In this tradition, board interlocks are often taken as *prima facie* evidence of a tie between two organizations or institutions (Burt, 1980;

Mizruchi, 1996; Mizruchi & Stearns, 1988; Palmer, 1983; Palmer, Friedland & Singh, 1986). Network diagrams are often used to plot the network of ties or connective topography between organizations (Davis, Yoo & Baker, 2003).

The structural approach to network analysis has given rise to numerous conceptual insights. One of the most important is that dominant actors within networks are the best connected, possessing the highest levels of social capital, serving as bridges across 'structural holes' to provide points of union between otherwise disconnected actors (Burt, 1992, 1997; Zaheer et al., 2010). The implication is that dominant focal 'egos' see the bigger picture whereas subordinate 'alters', lacking vital information, remain in positions of dependence, unaware of the full range of strategic choices available to them. Outcomes depend on circumstances and the strategic orientations of dominant actors. Zaheer and Soda (2009, p.4) argue that Burt's (1992) notion of structural holes highlights 'the entrepreneurial role of the network actor'. If a dominant actor chooses to play one subordinate actor off against another for private gain, adopting the so-called *tertius gaudens* (or 'third who enjoys') orientation, then bridging is an active source of individual competitive advantage (Simmel, 1902, pp.174-182). If, however, a dominant actor seeks to close structural holes in order to join alters together, sharing information to promote common purpose, pursuing the so-called *tertius iungens* (or 'third who joins') approach, a 'strategic orientation by which actors bring forth such combinations and recombinations' of actors, then bridging becomes instead a source of collective competitive advantage (Obstfeld, 2005, p.104). When and under what circumstances a dominant actor assumes an individual or collective perspective and its corresponding strategic orientation is of considerable theoretical interest (Das & Teng, 2002). Dominant organizations can shift orientations depending on circumstances; assuming

a *tertius gaudens* orientation in normal times when there is no threat to the field, and a *tertius iungens* orientation in exceptional times when the field as a whole may be under threat.

### *Network dynamics*

Topographical analysis of social networks has been complemented in more recent times by research on *network dynamics* (Newman, Barabási & Watts, 2006). The notion that organizations are structurally embedded in networks is suggestive of stability, diverting attention from significant changes in ties and flows of power across networks over time (Davis et al., 2003; Sasovova et al., 2010). Brass et al. (2004, p.809) rightly discern a ‘shift from statics to dynamics’ (Ahuja et al., 2012; Newman et al., 2006; Powell et al., 2005; Sasovova et al., 2010; Smith, Menon & Thompson, 2012). Despite this growing interest, more attention needs to be accorded to their empirical observation in actual contexts and in real time (Gulati, 1995; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001; Kahler, 2009). More account also needs to be taken of changing network states, moving away from the presumption that all ties are live and equally available, whereas it is more likely for subsets of ties to be activated periodically and for others to remain dormant for long periods prior to activation (Levin, Walter & Murnighan, 2011). Not all relationships are ‘wired’, but may retain latent potency, ready to be activated when the need arises (Smith et al., 2012). Burt (1992, p.68) describes such ties as being ‘on hold, sleepers ready to wake’. The mushrooming of social networking and microblogging sites like Twitter and Facebook has dramatically amplified the power of individuals to leverage influence and connections.

It follows from these observations that networks, as changeable entities, do not exist independently of people and organizations, but instead are the product of agency



as actors respond strategically to environmental change (Lizardo & Pirkey, 2014). Networks might be activated, extended and directed in pursuit of particular goals. At other times they might be neglected or dissolved in response to changed circumstances. Research on network dynamics is thus focused on processes such as network churn (Sasovova et al., 2010), structural evolution (Zaheer & Soda, 2009) and orchestration (Paquin & Howard-Grenville, 2013). Here our concern is with the rapid emergence, orchestration, mobilization and dissolution of a field-specific network alliance. We follow Paquin and Howard-Grenville (2013) in defining orchestration as ‘the process of assembling and developing an inter-organizational network’, and borrow from Smith et al. (2012, p.67) in defining mobilization as ‘the process of putting a network to use’. This coming together of field networks in response to a common threat highlights the importance of contingent events to network orchestration, and the significance of sensemaking narratives as framing mechanisms within alliances, helping to set aside differences and focus on shared objectives (Goffman, 1969; Johnston & Noakes, 2005). We propose that the success or failure of such alliances depends crucially on the ability of actors with a *tertius iungens* strategic orientation not only to activate, orchestrate and mobilize the combined network, but also when appropriate to extend their reach beyond the field to connect with high-status elite networks active within the field of power (Bourdieu, 1993; 1996; Maclean et al., 2010; Maclean, Harvey & Kling, 2014; Obstfeld, 2005).

#### *Social movements and social networks*

The power and agency of a network, as Keck and Sikkink (1998, p.216) assert, ‘usually cannot be reduced to the agency even of its leading members’. Complex networks serve as conduits for the transmission and reframing of ideas, the main currency for social change; the ‘*sites of power [being] the people’s minds*’ (Castells,

2004, p.425), hence the power of social movements in contemporary civil society (de Bakker, den Hond, King & Weber, 2013; Davis & Zald, 2005). Social movements, typified here by the reactionary (as opposed to progressive) GIBG campaign, are complex, underpinned by alliances of networks of varying types and degrees of formality (Diani, 2003a). We follow Diani (2011, p.226) in defining social movements as collective action ‘in which coordination takes place through informal networks between formally independent actors, who all identify ... with a common cause’. With their roots ‘in the fundamental injustice of all societies’ (Castells, 2012, p.12), social movements are seen as ‘the producers of new values and goals around which the institutions of society are transformed’ (p.9). The apparent unity of purpose of diverse but networked coalitions of organizations and individuals is a profound source of legitimacy (McAdam, 1996; Snow & Bedford, 1992) and key to any challenger seeking ‘to force the sponsors of a [competing] legitimating frame to defend its underlying assumptions’ (Gamson, 1992, p.68).

Four findings from social movement research have had a bearing on our own theoretical stance. First, there is evidence to show that social movements gain momentum by exploiting pre-existing network organizations affiliated to a particular cause through what Passy (2003, pp.21-43) labels the socialization (securing commitment), structural-connection (providing opportunities to participate) and decision-shaping (framing arguments) functions. Second, while leadership within social movements often seems distributed or unobtrusive, there are often focal actors operating behind the scenes whose ‘location at the centre of practical and symbolic resources among movement organizations’ (Diani, 2003b, p.106) accords them singular influence in building alliances, meaning that they are best placed ‘to act as “representatives” of the movement in the broader public sphere’ (Diani, 2003b,

pp.117-118). Network dynamics within social movements are often opaque, making it difficult to identify the source of leadership and coordination (Krinsky & Crossley, 2014); suggesting that actual leaders may not always be apparent. Third, in order to maintain network cohesion and build momentum, collective action frames, as interpretive schema, must be presented succinctly to focus attention ‘on what is relevant and important and away from extraneous items in the field of view’ (Noakes & Johnston, 2005, p.2). Finally, leading actors within social movements not only form ties with other members, but also with ‘resource-rich potential allies and representatives of the state’ (Krinsky & Crossley, 2014, p.6). Here we delve beneath the surface of the GIBG campaign to analyze how a social movement might be allied to the struggle of one section of the ruling elite (wealthy philanthropists) against another (government), as skilled dominant actors forge ties with more peripheral players in an effort to preserve the *status quo*.

## **Methodology**

This study grew out of a related project on entrepreneurship and philanthropy which investigated large-scale individual and business giving in the UK and internationally, historically and in the present (Harvey, Maclean, Gordon & Shaw, 2011; Maclean, Harvey, Gordon & Shaw, 2015). We had observed that partnering was often critical to the scaling up of philanthropic ventures, arousing our interest in the processes involved in the formation of nexuses of actors engaged in charitable ventures (Ball, 2008; Bjørkeng, Clegg & Pitsis, 2009). When the GIBG campaign ignited we found ourselves well placed to gain access to the network of ‘movers and shakers’ directing it within the philanthropic field. It quickly became apparent that actors across the field were in a state of agitation, freely voicing concerns on the Chancellor’s proposals and

encouraging resistance. There was widespread fear that charitable giving would plummet should the cap on tax relief pass into law. Numerous organizations were quick to rally behind the campaign announced by NCVO and CAF. It was also clear that the largest charities and foundations, while supporting the NCVO-CAF initiative, also intended to act independently in defence of the *status quo*.

These observations led us to theorize about the speed and comprehensiveness of actor network activation within the philanthropic field, and to develop the conceptual model presented in Figure 1. At core are the nodal actors that joined forces to lead the GIBG campaign. Following Ball (2008), who points to the growing policy influence and ‘convening power’ of philanthropists (Lindsay, 2008, p.62), we define ‘nodal actor’ as *an organization (and its key protagonists) with a natural constituency, legitimate voice and convening power which assumes responsibility for promoting the interests of the field*. Those who convene power, according to Brass et al. (2004, p.804), ‘include government agencies, foundations, and industry leaders who attempt to build networks among organizational actors’. Grouped around the triumvirate of nodal actors were their respective fields or ‘alliance constellations’ (Das & Teng, 2002; Gomes-Casseres, 1997), which we define as the *set of organizations that look to a nodal actor for leadership, responding positively and supporting calls to action*. This alliance constellation conforms to the ‘disconnected alters [that] seek out prominent and high-status teams’ identified by Zaheer and Soda (2009, p.26). Das and Teng (2002, p.448) remark that such alliance constellations may generate ‘a relatively deep sense of solidarity over time’; but also that they receive insufficient attention in the literature. Interacting with nodal actors, but remaining independent of them, are the large charities and foundations such as the Garfield Weston Foundation and Absolute Return for Kids (ARK). Such

organizations are less proactive than nodal actors, particularly in times of tranquillity; however when necessity arises, by virtue of their size and prominence, they take responsibility for defending the field as a whole. Acknowledging the role of guardian-of-the-field they assume, we introduce here the notion of ‘sentinel actor’ to signify *an organization (and its key representatives) which by virtue of its status and reputation plays a key role in defending the interests of the field.*

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

To research the dynamics of the GIBG campaign, we decided to explore actions, events and decisions from multiple network positions and perspectives (Knoke & Yang, 2008, pp.9-15). The narrative presented in the following section, which reconstructs the story of the campaign, how it took off, unfolded and reached its dénouement, is compiled from numerous interviews and textual sources. A key aspect of our methodology involved conducting in-depth interviews with agents from each of three network vantage points: nodal actor, alliance constellation and sentinel actor. The campaign was masterminded by a small number of key actors from the NCVO, CAF and PR spearheading the campaign, so large numbers of interviews from these were not feasible. We took the view that interviews from the three different types of actor should be evenly balanced. We therefore determined to locate six interviewees in each category who were close-to-the-action, including representatives from each of the trio of nodal organizations. The varying outlooks of actors on the drama hinged upon their individual positioning within the social topography of the field (Anheier, Gerhards & Romo, 1995; Borgatti et al., 2009). Accessing these contrastive views enabled us to build up a rich, multi-perspective picture of the network as a whole. Interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and were digitally

recorded and transcribed. A list of participants is provided in Table 1, all informants being accorded pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

The documentary and textual sources we draw on to present our case analysis were gleaned from a variety of provenances, including the GIBG website, NVCO, CAF, PR, Third Sector, Civil Society, Community Foundation Network (CFN), Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), social media (Twitter) and press releases. Despite the plurivocal, multi-faceted nature of our perspective acquired through access to different types of actor occupying varying positions in the network topography, our narrative necessarily entails ‘processes of interpretation and meaning production whereby [we] reflect on and interpret phenomena and produce intersubjective accounts’ (Brown, 2005, p.1581).

### **The ‘Give it Back, George’ Campaign**

Context matters in networks dynamics (Clegg, Pitsis, Rura-Polley & Marosszeky, 2002; Owen-Smith & Powell, 2008). The political climate at the time of GIBG was dominated by the deepest economic recession since the Great Depression, marked by genuine austerity and severe cuts to public services. Much depended on how the campaign and its messages were to be framed (Fiss & Hirsch, 2005; Fiss & Zajac, 2006; Paquin & Howard-Grenville, 2013); navigating between competing logics at play in the philanthropic field allied to conflicting discourses in society-at-large (Lounsbury, 2007; Marquis & Lounsbury, 2007).

On the one hand, the recession had focused attention on the role the better-off might play in regenerating communities (Dees, 2008). Public interest in philanthropy was on the rise (Acs & Phillips, 2002; Anheier & Leat, 2006; Dietlin, 2009;

Schervish, Coutsoukis & Lewis, 2005). According to this logic, philanthropists might step into the breach created by the withdrawal of public funding in accordance with Prime Minister (PM) Cameron's much vaunted Big Society, which sought to empower local communities and nurture a spirit of volunteering (Cameron, 2010; Maclean, Harvey & Gordon, 2013; Rowson, Kálmán Mezey & Norman, 2012). The perceived opportunity was to foster a new culture of giving (HM Government 2010; 2011; 2012) such that philanthropic efforts might be coordinated to generate a 'transformative capacity' (Giddens, 1976, p.110). Both the necessity and potential existed for philanthropy to play a bigger role in society. Just 27% of higher-rate tax payers in the UK were estimated to donate to charity; those earning above £200K a year giving just £2 for every £1000 of earnings (Philanthropy Review, 2011). Former PM Tony Blair (Mail Online, 2013) claimed that philanthropy was needed 'to lessen hostility to the rich', seeing this as a superior alternative to state intervention in mitigating the adverse effects of rising inequalities.

On the other hand, the presentation of the philanthropist as saviour collided with a new narrative that linked philanthropy directly with 'tax dodging' (Bishop & Green, 2008; Breeze, 2012). According to this logic, philanthropists were aiming to reduce their tax liability through the tax relief available for charitable giving via Gift Aid. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) gauged the sum claimed by higher-rate taxpayers for charitable donations in 2010-11 at £350m. The proposed cap sought to address this by limiting tax relief to £50K or 25 per cent of a person's income, whichever was greater, emulating a similar, albeit more generous cap introduced in the US. The strength of public sentiment over tax avoidance had escalated during the financial crisis. Companies like Google, Amazon and Starbucks were pilloried by the Public Accounts Committee for failing to pay tax on their UK earnings. Celebrities

who engaged in tax avoidance schemes (lawful but increasingly seen as immoral) were named and shamed in the media. Tax avoidance was no longer considered a 'victimless crime' but as robbing the country of the means to fund its public service provision (Barford & Holt, 2013). Added to this were concerns over 'hypothecation', the notion of who should decide how taxes are spent. Rich philanthropists, so the argument went, should have no greater right to specify how their taxes should be allocated than ordinary citizens. The ability to choose which causes should benefit from their donations effectively gave them 'another lever... to control the shape and delivery of public services' (Walker, 2012, p.14). The association of philanthropists with money-grubbing bankers, widely blamed for ruining the country's finances, might also encourage the general public to view the proposed cap in a positive light (Kerr & Robinson, 2011).

There was thus much more at stake than the loss of income to Britain's charities should the cap proceed. The balance of argument concerning philanthropy and the tax advantages enjoyed by the rich would likely swing away from those extolling the virtues of philanthropic choice towards those sceptical of the practical value of philanthropy as a means of achieving social goals. The Treasury proposal was read as a threat to philanthropic ideals and perceptions of donors in society (Brown & Jones, 2000; Goffman, 1969). The Chancellor's parallel announcement of a reduction in the top rate of income tax from 50 to 45 per cent for annual incomes above £150K did not help the case for philanthropists retaining existing tax privileges (Walker, 2012). Cast in the light of defender of the rich, Chancellor Osborne was keen to prove this was not so.

*Network formation and mobilization*



When Osborne dropped his bombshell in the House of Commons on Budget Day, 21 March 2012, it took the charitable and voluntary sectors entirely off guard. The NVCO had assumed the practice over the years of gathering core staff around a television in anticipation of key announcements, but expected nothing of note that day. When, towards the end of his speech, the Chancellor revealed that a tax relief cap would be introduced, they were taken aback, concerned that the consequences for the sector would be severe. No sooner had Osborne sat down than the NCVO obtained the Budget document following its release, alighting upon the sole paragraph it contained pertaining to the cap – whose impact on the voluntary and charitable sectors they deemed to be far-reaching.

Recognizing that this was a far bigger matter than NCVO could handle alone, within 30 minutes NCVO actors had contacted potential partners, of whom CAF, a regular ally, was first in line. The CEOs of CAF and NCVO, John Lowe and Sir Stuart Etherington, stepped forward to lead the campaign. Within 24 hours a website had been created and a name chosen for the campaign. ‘Give it Back’ was an early favourite, to which ‘George’ was appended – somewhat controversially, being rather personal, but the decision was taken to stick with it. The PR (2011), formed in December 2010 to celebrate philanthropy and encourage ‘more people to give and people to give more’, was horrified by what it saw as a blatant attack on its *raison d’être*. Invited by Sir Stuart Etherington, a board member, the PR joined forces with NCVO and CAF to form the nodal actor core to lead the campaign. While NCVO and CAF may be characterized as more left-leaning organizations, the PR comprised influential individuals, the tentacles of whose networks often spread deeply into Parliament and government.

That the GIBG campaign network was activated so speedily was partly due to the unexpected nature of the announcement and the perceived extent of the threat: UK charities were expected to lose £500m annually should the cap be imposed, tantamount to a 20% drop in giving. The PR had already mobilized its networks to boost philanthropic giving in the UK, having issued a ‘call to action’ the previous year. In this sense, its networks were already ‘premobilized’ and could be placed quickly on a war footing (Obstfeld, 2005, p.106). One interviewee in particular, Tristram, a PR board member and former investment banker, embraced a *tertius iungens* strategic orientation in bringing together disconnected alters (Obstfeld, 2005). Other interviewees spoke about him in this light, including Maurice who confirmed that Tristram had been instrumental in putting him in touch with high-level contacts:

Now, Tristram was particularly smart because Tristram always kept an open dialogue with... you know, he is an old Etonian, he knows Nick Hurd [Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Charities, Social Enterprise and Volunteering] of old, he certainly knows Cameron... I think he’s a different generation and he was able to speak to them candidly and within about four or five days we had a meeting with David Gauke [Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury], Osborne’s press secretary, Eleanor Shawcross [Treasury special adviser], the guy whose name I can’t remember who is head of taxation policy, and so Tristram invited myself and A and I think B to go to that meeting. (Maurice, nodal actor)

Of crucial importance was the framing of the debate given competing discourses among diverse audiences (Paquin & Howard-Grenville, 2013). NVCO and CAF felt that, with so many potential responses across the philanthropic field, if they spearheaded the campaign – by creating an alliance and steering group whose vision was broader than that of their separate organizations (Clegg et al., 2002) – they would be leading on an issue of direct importance to their respective memberships. The early days, according to insiders, were ‘quite crazy’, with the website up and running, hashtags defined, logos created, newsletters written, special advisers approached, and emails coming in thick and fast. Within 72 hours of its launch, support for the

campaign had swollen to over 1,000 organizations, ranging in diversity from major charities like Oxfam and Save the Children UK to minor associations such as the Blackpool Seaside Childminding Group and We Make Jam.

Initially the campaign was hampered by competition for air time and newspaper headlines generated by the proposed caravan and pasty taxes which also featured in the Budget. A turning-point came on 11th April 2012, when PM Cameron, speaking in Jakarta on a tour of the Far East, expressed the opinion that a cap was needed to prevent the tax system from being ‘abused’, suggesting that higher-rate taxpayers who gave to charity were practising tax avoidance:

Some people have been using charities established in other countries to funnel money in and get their tax rates so they’re not paying 50p tax or even 45p tax but in some cases are paying 10 or 20 per cent tax. (Telegraph Online, 2012)

The flames were fanned when David Gauke, Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, insisted some charities did not do ‘a great amount of charitable work’ (Third Sector Online, 2012b); the inference being, to paraphrase Orwell (2013[1945]), that some charities were more charitable than other charities. The equation of charitable giving with tax avoidance, coupled with the hint that some charities were inherently suspect, was fortuitous, galvanizing the campaign. When the government refused to back down despite a lack of evidence, it enabled the steering committee to heighten the campaign’s profile and propel it further up the political agenda.

### *Network orchestration*

The steering group of NCVO and CAF delegates first met about a week after the announcement. Daily phone calls between steering group members ensued, which became twice weekly as the campaign got underway, accompanied by weekly meetings. The division of labour between the three nodal actors was such that NCVO, with its large network within the voluntary sector, led on campaign support and dealt

with parliamentary affairs. CAF served as the public face of the network, researching the prospective impact of the cap on ‘hard pressed charities’ and feeding this to the media. The PR was instrumental in liaising with sentinel actors, concerned charities such as Cancer Research UK and the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign, bringing together disconnected actors and putting them in touch with the media to appear on programmes like Newsnight or Sky News; illustrating that ties centred on ‘the social fortress of one’s close, trusted friends’ (Smith et al., 2012, p.70) are crucial to coordination in a crisis (Brass et al., 2004; Krackhardt & Stern, 1988). Ostensibly, however, the PR remained at a discreet distance, eschewing the limelight while allowing CAF and the NCVO to assume overt co-leadership of the network. Too visible an intervention might prove counterproductive, running the risk that the philanthropists might appear as rich people upset that the government was bent on curbing their privileges. Philanthropists were therefore instructed to lobby their Member of Parliament (MP) and otherwise avoid the press. As Tristram explains:

So, when the Chancellor announced this most unfortunate discussion around the taxation of gifts and suddenly we were all portrayed as blunt-nosed criminals, I made a decision on the spot... I rang [X] and [Y] and said, ‘whatever people do, however many journalists ring you, you are not to comment and I’m not going to either.’ (Tristram, nodal actor)

Maurice from the PR did likewise:

I recall sending emails saying, ‘I think we could do ourselves more harm than good. It’s much better that the charity sector fronts this discussion because as soon as philanthropists do, it will always be attacked as rich people’s playthings.’ You know, people taking away their toys... So, we very much encouraged NCVO and CAF to lead the Give it Back, George campaign and said to quite a number of philanthropists, ‘we recommend you stay out of the press if you can’. (Maurice, nodal actor)

Further intelligence which the network received from senior government sources related to the genesis of the proposed cap. It seems the cap was a last-minute Liberal Democrat invention inserted into the Budget with little consultation. Having

rejected Liberal Democrat proposals for a ‘mansion tax’, Conservatives Cameron and Osborne had come under increasing pressure on the eve of Budget Day to concede some measure targeted at the wealthy – a ‘cap on allowances for rich people’, as one interviewee put it – to placate their Liberal Democrat Coalition partners. It was the eleventh-hour nature of this proposal, added to the fact that it came from the Liberal Democrats, which explains its unexpectedness for nodal actors with strong political connections, particularly with Conservatives. In the classic style of policy-making on the hoof, it appears the consequences for charities were entirely overlooked. Yet viewed as horse-trading on the part of the two government parties, any reversal of the decision would cause ructions for Conservatives Osborne and Cameron in their relationship with their Coalition partners, unless nodal actors could neutralize their arguments for the cap in the first place; hence the importance of reframing the debate. Thereafter, much of the steering group’s efforts were targeted at the heart of government. Lacking a direct entry route to the ‘quad’ (Cameron, Osborne, Deputy PM Nick Clegg, and Chief Secretary to the Treasury Danny Alexander), the NCVO and CAF performed detailed mapping of those connections they did have in senior government, including Cabinet Ministers, Cabinet Office officials and Treasury special advisers. They concentrated on Conservative backbenchers with direct links to the PM’s office (10 Downing Street), activating pre-existing links with the Treasury, the Departments for Communities and Local Government (CLG), Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to get their message across. A particular strength was found in the extensive number of weak ties possessed by board members of nodal actors, the more diffuse network structure of whose constellations proved ‘conductive to

collective action' (Borgatti et al., 2009, p.894; Granovetter, 1973). At times such activities were taken to extreme lengths, as one interviewee explained:

I think the most ridiculous one ... was that we were contacted by a charity who said 'we've got some very strong links with the Ambassador for Dubai who, by coincidence, is going to be spending six hours in a taxi with George Osborne this weekend' and we said: 'Right, great, get him on the phone and we will talk to him about what the arguments are and brief him, essentially, and if it comes up in conversation, not that this man is in any way going to give him the hard sell but just make his opinion known and have a nice conversation with George Osborne'. (Candice, nodal actor).

### *Building momentum*

A constant stream of stories demonstrating the good achieved by philanthropists and the threat to giving posed by the government's proposals were issued as press releases and filled the pages of the GIGB website and those of network members. Of the various broadsheet and red-top newspapers, the *Telegraph*, the *Times*, the *Evening Standard* and the *Daily Mail* proved the most receptive, none of which were conventional supporters of the left-leaning NCVO or CAF. Churches lent strong support, as did universities, who stood to lose donations from alumni. The message that the proposed tax reforms were dangerous and unjustified was reinforced systematically through direct lobbying of MPs, officials, advisors and government ministers. Encouragingly the message came back from sympathetic insiders that it was worth persisting, as the political leadership began to sense the dangers of changing the rules of the philanthropic game.

The campaign peaked by weeks three or four, by which time it had achieved a significant media profile. On a human level, however, its organizers at CAF and NCVO were beginning to run out of steam and the campaign began to falter; likened by one member to 'going through treacle' (Candice, nodal actor). Keeping momentum going became an end in itself, with a contingency plan of campaign devised stretching

into 2013, while the government tried to close down the issue by promising a consultation. For a fortnight, the group privately contemplated a compromise, examining the impact of the cap if it were raised to 40% or 80% of an individual's annual income; but took care not to disclose this publicly. Some parliamentarians urged them to do a deal; others insisted they should keep going. John Lowe and Sir Stuart Etherington were adamant they should stick to their guns. Having mustered such extensive support, they would be letting activists down if they were to broker a deal, so they persisted. Unlike CAF and the NCVO, the PR *did* have access to the heart of government. Towards the end of May, a small negotiating group of philanthropists was invited to meet Osborne personally. For ninety minutes, the conversation revolved around the spectrum of options available for a compromise. They emerged from the meeting feeling that they had been listened to, but with no idea as to what would happen next.

### *Resolution*

The end, when it came, was swift. On 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012, one interviewee from the PR received a call from Eleanor Shawcross, a Treasury special adviser, to say the Chancellor was about to stand up in the House of Commons to announce a complete U-turn. CAF and the NCVO received similar calls. Osborne's about-turn was worded as follows:

It is clear from our conversations with charities that any kind of cap could damage donations and, as I said at the Budget, that's not what we want at all. So we've listened. (Chancellor George Osborne, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012)

That the policy reversal was total came as a surprise, but there was no time to savour victory. Instead, campaign organizers had to get on the phone, write statements, alert supporters, draft press releases, and marshal activity. A new hashtag was devised (#thanksgeorge). Altogether, the GIBG website had elicited 45,584

views, with the campaign attracting 3,821 mentions on Twitter. Six months later, CAF and NCVO were jointly awarded the Public Affairs News 'Voluntary Sector Campaign of the Year' award for 2012. The judging panel described the GIBG campaign as 'one of the biggest coordinated campaigns across the voluntary sector in years', utilizing 'techniques of social and traditional media, research and lobbying in an innovative way to provoke unprecedented public debate about the benefits of philanthropy across many sectors of society'.

Fligstein (2001, p.107) observes that at times 'under some social conditions, the skilled performances of certain actors can be more pivotal than at others'. The entrepreneurial role of actors with a *tertius iungens* strategic orientation in the PR was kept firmly offstage while others 'made the noise' (Zaheer & Soda, 2009). Tristram remarks that 'the only public statement I ever made... was to congratulate [Osborne] when he changed his mind'. Nevertheless, the PR felt it had been dealt a near-fatal blow by the Chancellor's announcement from which, despite his volte-face, it was unable to recover. The campaign it had intended to run encouraging the rich to give more was stopped in its tracks. As Tristram explains:

What it did do for us in the [Philanthropic] Review was it didn't kill us stone dead but it was a pretty mortal wound. I mean, the timing was beastly. We'd just got everything lined up. We got all our recommendations clear. We were beginning to make headway. And then Bang! It came like a hammer. So, no, it was not a good moment. (Tristram, nodal actor)

## **Actors, Roles and Network Dynamics**

### *Network dynamics in the philanthropic field*

It is important here to reinforce the point that partnering is a common practice within philanthropic circles. The objective of a given charitable project and the resources required to address it normally exceed the powers of any individual philanthropist or foundation. Even superwealthy foundations, like the Bill & Melinda Gates



Foundation, are wary of tackling such issues alone, and consequently seek partners with cognate interests, values and objectives. There are therefore ‘compelling motives to collaborate’ (Brass et al., 2004, p.804). In the mode of a *tertius iungens* strategic orientation (Obstfeld, 2005), Tristram enthuses about the partnerships the foundation he represents engages in:

We love partnership. So, we work with people like Rag Foundation; we’ve worked with Henry Smith in Northern Ireland; we’ve worked with Rankin in the North East. We work with the Museums Foundation to work out which museums to support. So, we’re quite modest; we’re very low key and we’re very professional and from a governance point of view...we rely on our 27 absolutely excellent colleagues to bring proposals to us. (Tristram, nodal actor)

This propensity for partnering is accentuated by the fact that the philanthropists we interviewed were without exception highly networked individuals, often internationally so. This applied to their business ties as much as to their philanthropic networks. The social organization of giving represents a vital aspect of the benefits which accrue to philanthropists through their involvement in charitable works (Maclean et al., 2015). As Carole (nodal actor) explained: ‘It’s like high level networking really... What I do believe is collectively, we can do so much more than I can do individually’.

If networking is inherent to philanthropic engagement beyond a certain level, it is not necessarily integral to the practice of *giving voice* to that experience through participation in a networked politics of philanthropy (Kahler, 2009). Philanthropists jealously guard their own privacy, as demonstrated by the PR’s decision to limit its visibility while other nodal actors provided the public face of the campaign. The PR had been conceived as a network, designed to encourage a ‘mass campaign that uses the power of peer networks and influencers to inspire others to give’ (Philanthropy Review, 2011, p.13). Now disbanded, having only been envisaged as temporary, its

main achievement, according to Maurice (nodal actor), lay in creating the network: ‘We were able to marshal networks in a way we would not have been able to if we hadn’t all known each other through the Philanthropy Review’. The proposed charity tax and ensuing GIBG campaign brought philanthropists together in an innovative, dynamic network which had not previously existed, united in a spirited defence of philanthropic practice, believed to be in jeopardy:

A number of new relationships between philanthropists were formed during this [GIBG] process and a number stepped forward to lead the public discourse. Their common interest in a favourable regime for giving, their passion for the causes they choose to support and the slight that they felt by being characterised as tax avoiders was evident. (Bowcock, 2012, p.3)

#### *Campaign stakes and message framing*

There is no doubt that the bolt from the blue delivered by Osborne on Budget Day, intimating that a cap on tax relief for charitable giving was in the offing, constituted a major threat to Britain’s charitable sector. At stake was Britain’s long-standing philanthropic heritage of around 180,000 registered charities facing combined annual losses of £500m., according to CAF calculations (Charity Commission, 2013; Philanthropy Review, 2011). The threat, however, loomed much larger than this, concerning the manner in which the future narrative on donations and donors was to be fashioned and written. Philanthropists were aghast at being depicted as ‘tax dodgers’ (Breeze, 2012). One interviewee, Geoffrey, summed up his irritation:

There are two things that bother me. One is that it has been presented as a crackdown on tax avoidance scams, and that I find really insulting because I fundamentally believe that 99% of what people give is from the goodness of their hearts, not because they are trying to do anything naughty or reprehensible. But, the other is and this was actually... a Conservative junior minister who said this the other day: ‘It’s as if these people think they know better than government how to spend their money’. (Geoffrey, sentinel actor)

Bowcock (2012, p.4) observes that such criticism of philanthropic giving betrays a misunderstanding of the facts, since ‘more than double the amount of tax

has to be given away to claim tax relief'. One nodal actor, Candice, concurs, stating: 'we're always very keen to make sure we are setting the frame, the terms of reference of the debate... Nobody gets richer by giving away huge amounts of their money, essentially'. If however 'all apparently disinterested actions conceal intentions to maximise a certain kind of profit' (Bourdieu, 1998, p.90), then the 'symbolic function of legitimisation' that philanthropy performs is called into question if it no longer attracts acclaim but opprobrium; incurring the risk that the damage done to philanthropy through its reframing as tax avoidance might affect the charitable sector for years to come.

In casting aspersions on the morality of charitable giving, the government's arguments ran counter to its own encouragement of philanthropy under the umbrella of the Big Society (Cameron, 2010; Rowson et al., 2012; Reay & Hinings, 2009). As Harpal Kumar, then CEO of Cancer Research UK, confirmed: 'People who donate substantial gifts to charity are likely to be deterred by this new measure, which is completely at odds with the Government's commitment to nurture a culture of giving' (NCVO, 2012). Any policy expected to effect a 20% reduction in charitable giving was contrary to public interest. As Bourdieu (1998, pp.144-5) asserts, 'it is also among the tasks of a politics of morality to work incessantly toward unveiling hidden differences between official theory and actual practice'. Network actors were therefore motivated to hold the government accountable to its own stated policies and professed beliefs.

#### *Actor roles and alliance constellations*

An analysis of the organizational networks of the three nodal actors in GIBG is presented in Table 2. This requires interpretation. The NCVO represents charities in England. Its board reflects its constituency and mission with members drawn from

medium- to large-sized grass-roots charities, like Macmillan Cancer Support and the Royal National Institution for Blind People. It is in effect a trade body that sets standards, provides training, conducts research, speaks publicly on behalf of the sector and lobbies government for advantageous changes in policy and regulations. However, the NCVO is not well connected at board level beyond the charitable sector, with its reach largely confined to the public sector, policy fora and the media. In contrast, CAF can be seen to be weakly networked at board level within the sector but extensively connected beyond it, with multiple high-level connections to the financial sector, including Barclays, HSBC and Deutsche Bank, public bodies, business services and the media. This reflects the status of CAF as banker and service provider to the sector with a large turnover and sizeable workforce. NCVO and CAF are connected at board level by the Chairman of NCVO, media celebrity and entrepreneur, Martyn Lewis.

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

The third nodal actor within the GIBG campaign network, the PR, was connected at board level by NCVO CEO Sir Stuart Etherington. In effect, the PR was a readymade network partner for NCVO and CAF that greatly extended its reach and connectivity within and beyond the charitable sector. Its moving spirit, Sir Thomas Hughes-Hallett, had assembled a group that included some of the most highly connected individuals in British philanthropy. Many were major philanthropists in their own right and many others CEOs or board members of leading trusts, foundation and charities. A common characteristic of members of this ‘golden circle’ was that they not only operated at the highest levels within their chosen fields (finance, business, media and the law), but also connected to numerous influential organizations beyond them. Hence, the much higher order of network connectivity

recorded for board members of the PR, anchored within the field of power, compared to those of NCVO and CAF (Bourdieu, 1993; 1996). Members of the PR directly or indirectly connected GIBG with the UK's biggest donors, prominent foundations, top City firms, government agencies, prestigious cultural institutions, powerful media organizations and, most important of all in this case, leading politicians.

There is no doubt that the ostensible co-leadership of the GIBG by the charitable sector, CAF and NCVO, confirmed by their joint receipt of an award, accorded the GIBG campaign a moral legitimacy it would have lacked had it been orchestrated purely by wealthy philanthropists (Suchman, 1995). It was critical to the campaign's success that it was not cast as a power play by the rich seeking to augment their own leverage (Kahler, 2009). The motivation attributable to the charity sector in directing the campaign was devoid of association with any possible private benefit, such as might be gained through legitimacy-seeking amongst diverse stakeholders (Burke, 1969; Mills, 1940; Saia et al., 2003; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). One philanthropist compares the under-the-radar role played by the PR to that of a small trade union negotiating team engaged in talks with management behind closed doors, whilst those outside did the shouting:

What that meant was there was a dialogue between the people in government who were saying 'we're not going to win this one' and the sector but not the people who were making all the noise. So I equate it to the small trade union negotiating team that are inside the boardroom while all the shop stewards are outside standing round the braziers chanting. (Maurice, nodal actor)

In terms of sentinel actors, whose role lies in defending the interests of the field as a whole, Geoffrey explains what it means to be one:

As head of the foundation... it's a little bit stressful if there is a regulatory issue going on, and we have that every now and then... Then, I and the secretary and any legal advisers have to go into bat... It will be back. Something will be back, some threat. And, I see my role... as being the sort of first line of defence for the rest of the organisations against external threats, whether they are regulatory or PR or whatever. (Geoffrey, sentinel actor)

Geoffrey conceives of his role as head of a large philanthropic foundation as being ready to 'go into bat' to defend it and the wider field whenever an external threat rears its head, watching over the interests of the field as a whole. This highlights the role of sentinel actors as being less politically active than nodal actors, yet serving as stalwart defenders of the field when called upon to do so.

The GIBG campaign's widening cast of participants as the campaign took off produced 'new logics of affiliation' (Owen-Smith & Powell, 2008, p.610). The involvement of social media, eliciting spontaneous support from anonymous campaign backers drawn from the public-at-large, whose individual ties to the alliance constellation were loose but highly regarded in terms of the authenticity they afforded, enhanced the campaign's legitimacy by strengthening its voice (Granovetter, 1973; Kahler, 2009; King, 2004).

Thus, while nodal actors led the charge on behalf of the network, both overtly in the case of CAF and NVCO and more discreetly on the part of the PR, they were aided by sentinel actors whose individual actions and positioning in the field provided a useful defence of its interests. They were simultaneously backed by the wider legitimating field of myriad campaign supporters (see Figure 1). This collaboration of a broad array of diverse players was vital to the campaign's moral leverage, legitimacy and ultimate success (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Owen-Smith & Powell, 2008; Reay & Hinings, 2009; Suchman, 1995), enhancing its moral mobilizing power while drawing a convenient veil over behind-the-scenes intervention by nodal and sentinel actors. The outcome of this triangulation of network actors with their contrasting public-private roles was such that it served, temporarily at least, to unite the charitable sector, something that had never happened before. Maurice puts his finger on this when recounting a meeting between government and the small

negotiating group of philanthropists: ‘I remember the head of Red Cross standing up and saying, “Ministers, I’d really like to congratulate you because it’s the first time I have ever seen the charity sector agree on something!”’

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The GIBG campaign illustrates the generative capacity of dynamic networks as channels of diffusion and potential transformation (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Institutional fields may be refashioned by collaborative agency accomplished through the coalescence and development of networks (Reay & Hinings, 2009). Network dynamics as revealed through the case involve status-differentiated social actors ‘of variable geometry’ whose collaboration was crucial to success, each nodal organization having to reach beyond its natural constituency to ally itself with other players (Owen-Smith & Powell, 2008; Pitsis, Clegg, Marosszeky & Rura-Polley, 2003). Their networked collective action assumed a runaway momentum, seemingly indicative of the pre-eminence of contemporary social network flows over more traditional sources of power (Castells, 2010). Closer inspection, however, reveals that behind the braziers, away from the tweets and the ‘madding crowd’, the three powerful actors were able to make their voice heard through more conventional means of interlocks and lobbying activities; and ultimately through elite intervention within the field of power, determined by their ‘positions in the prior social structure’ (Zaheer & Soda, 2009, p.25). High-status actors within the PR with links to senior government members played a critical role in stage-managing the movement’s development. The *tertius iungens* strategic orientation assumed by PR leaders entailed consummate social skill. Entrepreneurs are present not only in business but also in political and social life, as Fligstein (2001, p.107) observes: ‘some actors are more

socially skilful in getting others to cooperate, maneuvering around more powerful actors, and generally knowing how to build political coalitions in life'. Hence according to Obstfeld (2005), a *tertius iungens* strategic orientation contains the seeds of potential collective action. By adopting the practices of network entrepreneurs, the individuals directing the GIBG campaign accessed diversity and fostered a context conducive to their network objectives (Zaheer & Soda, 2009).

Analysis of the GIBG case 'invites the observer to look below the official stories and representations that movements and their activists make and discover hidden dynamics and relations' (Krinsky & Crossley, 2013, p.1). Privileged access to some of its leading protagonists enabled us to discern the 'hidden transcript' behind the public narrative (Scott, 1990). This reveals that like CAF and NCVO who fronted the campaign and won the award, 'those people *designated* as leaders... are not necessarily the *real* leaders' (Krinsky & Crossley, 2013, p.2). Our core insight in this paper is that while certain actors are needed to activate ties, galvanize change and bring together disconnected others, such actors are often less visible than *ostensible* dominant actors. In this regard, our study also teaches us about power relationships. Whilst extant research has demonstrated how 'disconnected alters seek out prominent and high-status actors' (Zaheer & Soda, 2009, p.26), our research shows that at times *the reverse may apply*, as dominant, focal actors consciously seek out disconnected, lower-status alters to reap the benefits of broader alliance constellations (Das & Teng, 2002; Gomes-Casseres, 1997), which amplify the voices of focal actors while affording them a protective cloak of invisibility. Such ties are driven by nodal actors' initiatives that are reciprocated and in the process legitimized by less prominent actors.



The case, more generally, suggests provisional answers to the three questions that have guided our research. First, in relation to *resistance* and *momentum*, the GIBG campaign network served as a motor for field-level change, resetting logics of action by spurring it to work together productively in defence of a perceived common threat, in a rare display of unity despite the status-differentiated nature of the field (Courpasson, Dany & Clegg, 2012; King, 2004; Owen-Smith & Powell, 2008). Collaboration on the part of assortatively differentiated actors conferred a broad legitimacy which the campaign would have lacked had it been led purely by philanthropists (Sasovova et al., 2010), ‘universalization being the strategy of legitimation par excellence’ (Bourdieu, 1998, p.143). The manner in which the debate was framed was crucial (Johnston & Noakes, 2005), power being ‘a function of an endless battle around cultural codes of society’ (Castells, 2004, p.425). The UK government’s clumsy framing of its message, which stated that ‘philanthropy is not welcome and needs to be cracked down upon’ (GIBG, 2012), was imbued with contradictory logics, portraying donors as tax avoiders just when the state was actively seeking to nurture a new culture of giving (King, 2004; Lounsbury, 2007; Marquis & Lounsbury, 2007; Reay & Hinings, 2002). The inconsistency of the government’s message, allied to its lack of unity in its defence, contrasted with the coherent unified logic promoted by the GIBG network. As Hughes-Hallett, then CEO of Marie Curie Cancer Care, expressed it, ‘It’s bad news for cancer, bad news for care at the end of life, bad news for support for the aged’ (GIBG, 2012). The GIBG campaign benefited from a message which was blessedly simple: the most vulnerable in society would pay a high price.

Of course, the unified logic on the part of the GIBG network was not entirely unproblematic. The fact is that the sole occasion the British philanthropic field had

united, it had done so not to protect the poor but to defend the rich. This presented the field with a moral problem for the future, since the appearance of disinterestedness depends on ‘the sacrificing of individual interest to the general interest’ (Bourdieu, 1998, p.142), which the network’s defence of the wealthy called into question.

Second, in relation to *strategy* and *leadership*, we observe that the GIBG network benefited throughout from the rapid emergence of and pursuit of a simple but effective strategy: insistence *in public* that the proposed charity cap be dropped, while engaging *in private* with the Chancellor and his advisors to find a workable settlement, prepared to tolerate compromise whilst recommending that the best political course was wholesale abandonment following due consultation.

Notwithstanding the dual nature of the campaign, public and private, both charitable sector and philanthropic leaders spoke with one voice, remaining united and on message throughout. This was a considerable achievement, since as is common in networks (Mehra, Smith, Dixon & Robertson, 2006), the leadership team was distributed, with both nodal and sentinel actor leaders meeting behind the scenes with government officials and political leaders. The topography of the network, allying at its core the two main organizations of the UK charitable sector with a powerful group of highly networked philanthropists, played out in the assignment of campaign responsibilities, NCVO and CAF leading in public and the PR with the support of a group of sentinel actors leading discreetly in private. Thus the philanthropic interest, whose fiscal privileges the Chancellor had sought to curb, found itself out of the limelight but sheltered within the corridors of power. Here the representatives of the wealthy could speak directly with advisors and decision makers about alternative scenarios and their likely consequences. Yet far from being seen as special pleading, they were positioned at the negotiating table not as plutocrats but as legitimate, if

unelected, representatives of a unified national movement, voicing the opinions of the common man in pursuit of common cause, a compelling rhetorical strategy (McAdam, 1996; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005).

Third, in relation to *power* and *governance*, we have shown that the lobbying power and political substance of philanthropic actors were clearly instrumental in Osborne's eventual capitulation. The emphasis on connectivity as indiscernible flows whilst ignoring the actual specifics of network dynamics runs the risk of circumventing individual agency (Stalder, 2009). As Cowhey and Mueller (2009) remind us, the appearance of flatness may belie the hidden hierarchy at work in the network. We therefore take issue with Castells, whose conception of the network society typified by faceless flows of power leaves little room for an agentially effective power elite, such as we encountered during our research. Castells (2004, p.33) argues:

There is no power elite... It is precisely because there is no power elite capable of keeping under its control the programming and switching operations of all the important networks that more subtle, complex and negotiated systems of power enforcement have to be established.

We consider it erroneous to suggest that in a networked society the power elite has somehow vanished or forfeited its power. The philanthropists involved in GIBG were acutely conscious of the need to maintain a low profile to avoid delegitimizing the campaign (Townley, 2002). But this does not invalidate their status and agency as high-level social actors assuming a *tertius iungens* strategic orientation to deploy their networks, albeit under the radar and backed up by field-level noise (Obstfeld, 2005). Viewed in this light, the GIBG campaign emerges as a story of elite alliances and power legitimization concerned with field preservation at the elite level.

With respect to each of these three aspects of networks research – *mobilization* and *momentum*, *strategy* and *structure*, *power* and *governance* – our research is

suggestive rather than conclusive, limited by its focus on a single case study and organizational field (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Siggelkow, 2007). We suggest nevertheless that GIBG comprises a unique empirical case. Whilst compared to other social movements, it may appear small-scale and short-lived, this has enabled us to study it as a whole, from beginning to end. Having privileged access to GIBG actors occupying differing positions in the network topography whose activity was key to its dénouement allowed us to access ‘hidden transcripts’, sparking insights which might have been lacking in a more broadly-based comparative study (Scott, 1990). This has enabled us to elaborate the role of dominant nodal actors with direct links to power who, at times, may seek to obscure their connections in the field of power by widening their networks with loose, disconnected ties to better serve their interests (Bourdieu, 1996; Obstfeld, 2005; Smith et al., 2012). Future research might explore this further, in an era when relations between the state and its citizens are in the process of being redrawn and renegotiated.

The nature of our research contribution is twofold. First, we add to literature that emphasizes the dynamic nature of social networks (Ahuja et al., 2012; Kahler, 2009; Newman et al., 2006; Powell et al., 2005; Sasovova et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2012). As elite incumbents in the philanthropic field fought to uphold the *status quo* and defeat game-changing government proposals, our study shines a light on the network dynamics at work in the process. Although some commentators like Castells (2004; 2010) focus their analyses on imperceptible ‘flows of power and wealth’ (Stalder, 2006, p.132), we examine the philanthropic field in action by taking account of the agents who bring their networks to life (Owen-Smith & Powell, 2008). Without due regard to the network topography and the leaders who animate it, any study of network dynamics is arguably partial and incomplete (Stalder, 2006). We build on the

work of Obstfeld (2005) to elaborate the role of actors who assume a *tertius iungens* strategic orientation, enhancing understanding of what network orchestrators actually do ‘to frame the value of the network for diverse audiences’ (Paquin & Howard-Grenville, 2013, p.1626). Whilst extant research has revealed how lower-status actors may seek to profit from the networks of higher-status actors (Paquin & Howard-Grenville, 2013), we demonstrate that *the reverse may also apply*, showing that elite players with high-level contacts may likewise seek to benefit from the wider constellation (Das and Teng, 2002; Gomes-Casseres, 1997). Most importantly, in emphasizing that certain actors are needed to catalyse change by activating ties and bringing together disconnected actors, we suggest that *such actors may often be less visible than apparent dominant actors*. In the GIBG case, the media furore served as a convenient veil and decoy that concealed and distracted attention from the PR’s behind-the-scenes exploitation of its network of elite ties to subvert Osborne’s proposal, highlighting the importance of stage management in collective action (Goffman, 1969).

Second, we add to the literature on social movements (Johnston & Noakes, 2005; Krinsky & Crossley, 2014), particularly insofar as this overlaps with social network and field theories (Fligstein, 2001; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). There is a presupposition in the literature that social movements are inherently progressive. The GIBG case teaches us conversely that social movements are not always as reformist as they are often presumed to be, bound up with a ‘major redistribution of wealth and/or power’ as challengers seize political opportunities to drive change, but can be deployed by incumbents for *reactionary* purposes (McAdam, 1996, p.341; Tarrow, 1998). This resonates with Fligstein’s (2001, p.118) work on field theory, which holds that in the face of a common threat, incumbents will tend to preserve the *status quo*

(Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). When such threats emanate from outside the field, as in the GIBG case, skilled dominant actors may seek to forge ties with more peripheral players in the field in order to maintain the *status quo*. Whereas we often read stories about minorities in social movement research – including racial, gender and religious minorities, see McAdam (1996) and Valocchi (2005) – that legitimate themselves within a field and successfully subvert the existing order, the GIBG case provides an interesting twist on this as we see an elite organization (the PR) forming ties to defend its interests *vis-à-vis* another powerful actor from outside the field (the government). Hence, the story we narrate here is not so much one of field transformation than one of *field preservation at the elite level* in the face of threatening change, even when such elites remain out of sight and at one remove from the apparent action.

The primary outcome from the GIBG campaign, beyond overturning the proposed cap, was that the philanthropic field demonstrated its ability to unite, albeit temporarily. This transient union is itself an achievement. As Clegg et al. (2002, p.333) observe: ‘Creating an alliance of contractually committed organizational stakeholders is no mean accomplishment’. The disbanding of the network following the campaign’s successful conclusion does not preclude the possibility of its subsequent reactivation in response to new, as yet unspecified threats, suggesting that latency best describes its current status (Levin et al., 2011). Its brief coalescence changed the logic of the philanthropic field by demonstrating the possibility of collaboration, engendering as its legacy the prospect of future alliances (Reay & Hinings, 2009). This underlines the potential of network dynamics to reset logics of action that operate in a given field.

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**Table 1: Participants in UK Philanthropic Networks Research**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Actor Description</b>	<b>Location in Network</b>
Anthony	Businessman. Philanthropist. Established foundation.	Sentinel actor
Bradley	Philanthropy professional.	Nodal actor
Candice	Philanthropy professional.	Nodal actor
Carole	Businesswoman. Philanthropist.	Nodal actor constellation
Dennis	Businessman. Philanthropist. Established foundation.	Nodal actor constellation
Geoffrey	Businessman. Philanthropist. Head of family foundation.	Sentinel actor
Hermione	Businesswoman. Philanthropist. Co-established family foundation.	Sentinel actor
Ike	Businessman. Philanthropist. Established foundation.	Nodal actor constellation
Ingram	Businessman. Philanthropist. Established corporate foundation.	Sentinel actor
Jennifer	Philanthropist. Co-established family foundation.	Sentinel actor
Kevin	Businessman. Philanthropist. Established foundation.	Nodal actor constellation
Maurice	Businessman. Philanthropist. Co-Established family foundation.	Nodal actor
Murdoch	Businessman. Philanthropist. Established foundation.	Nodal actor constellation
Peter	Businessman. Philanthropist. Co-established foundation.	Nodal actor constellation
Ryan	Philanthropy professional.	Nodal actor
Tristram	Businessman. Philanthropist. Philanthropy professional.	Nodal actor
Troy	Businessman. Philanthropist. Established foundation.	Sentinel actor
Vivian	Businessman. Philanthropist	Nodal actor

**Table 2: Alliance Constellations and Reach of Nodal Actors**

<b>Nodal Actor</b>	<b>Alliance Constellation</b>	<b>Charitable Network Reach*</b>	<b>Extra-Charitable Network Reach**</b>
NCVO – National Council for Voluntary Organizations (CEO and 14 Trustees)	The umbrella body for English with 10,500+ members; using income to conduct research, provide information and advice, develop and propose policies, and campaigning.	Board Interlocks = 20. Interlocks per capita = 1.33.	Network Reach = 9. Positions per capita = 0.6. Distribution: public sector (3); media (2); policy forums (2); business and professional services (1); cultural sector (1).
CAF – Charities Aid Foundation (CEO and 11 Trustees)	A provider of philanthropic services for charities, companies and individual donors; operating on a large scale in the UK and internationally with 500+ employees; assisting in fundraising (£448 million, 2012/13), providing banking and financial services, including fund management (£2.9 billion, 30 April 2013); also offers advice, conducts research, and engages in policy development and campaigning.	Board Interlocks = 8. Interlocks per capita = 0.66.	Network Reach = 18. Positions per capita = 1.5. Distribution: financial sector (6); public bodies (5); business and professional services (3); media (3); cultural sector (1). .
The Philanthropy Review (17 Trustees)	A small but well-connected UK policy and campaigning organization with just five employees; established by a group of philanthropic, business and third sector leaders to gather evidence and campaign for practical measures to build a stronger culture of philanthropy in the UK. The Philanthropy Review Charter and Call to Action was launched in June 2011.	Board Interlocks = 31. Interlocks per capita = 1.82.	Network Reach = 32 Positions per capita = 1.88. Distribution: financial sector (8); public bodies (6); business and professional services (5); media (5); cultural Sector (4); policy forums (4).

\*Board interlocks in 2012 of nodal CEO and trustees with other philanthropic organizations. \*\*Board memberships or senior executive positions held by nodal CEO and trustees in other types of organizations.

**Figure 1: Network Model for ‘Give it Back, George’**

